

Now is the time to plan for swamp cooler upgrades  
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Special to the Sentinel

With this summer's record-breaking number of days with highs measuring more than 90 degrees in the Grand Valley, there had been an increased reliance on cooling systems to for residents to keep comfortable. As a result, you may have a higher water bill and you might be wondering why. If you have evaporative cooling this may be the reason.

Most homes and businesses in the Grand Valley have refrigerated air conditioning or evaporative cooling (also commonly known as swamp coolers). Although swamp coolers take less electricity to operate than refrigerated air, they can use a surprising amount of water on a daily basis because a constant supply of water is needed to wet the cooler pads.

Generally there are two types of evaporative coolers: Water bleed systems (also known as backwash systems) and no-bleed systems. According to the California Urban Water Conservation Council ([www.h2ouse.org](http://www.h2ouse.org)), an evaporative cooler without a bleed system uses an average of 3.5 gallons of water per hour. On the other hand, coolers with a bleed system average 10.5 gallons of water use per hour. Although the bleed system is often desirable because it reduces the amount of minerals collecting in the cooling pads and keeps the water "fresh," this system uses much more water. The difference can be as much as 22,000 gallons versus 7,300 gallons for the non-bleed system. Considering that most of this annual use is applied to your water bill during the summer season alone, the increase in your water bill can be noticeable. Now that the hot summer is winding down, start planning now for cooler upgrades for next year. As an added incentive to upgrade your evaporative cooler to a more-efficient model, both of power companies who supply the Grand Valley (Grand Valley Power and Xcel Energy) recently implemented cost-incentive programs to help customers upgrade old, inefficient evaporative systems. Contact your power supplier for more information, as well as your plumber, for installation options. Whatever you do, try to upgrade your system while the temperatures are cooler and you can thoroughly research your options – upgrading or repairing your cooling system when the house temperature is 100 degrees can be quite stressful and painful to the pocketbook!

*We live in a semiarid climate where droughts will always be a part of our environment. Water for our future means conserving now. The Drought Response Information Project (DRIP) is a collaboration between the valley's domestic water utilities and CSU Cooperative Extension to provide information and educate the public about drought and the importance of water conservation.*